

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
122 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
122 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Durbin:

The Department of Defense peer-reviewed Breast Cancer Research Program (DOD BCRP) has established itself as a model medical research program. The DOD BCRP's progress in the fight against breast cancer has been made possible by this Committee's investment in breast cancer research. **We thank you for your past support, and ask that you provide funding \$150 million for fiscal year (FY) 2021 for the DOD BCRP in the Department of Defense Appropriations bill.** The critical work of this program must be continued at this level of funding because:

- **It is a demonstrated success:** Ground-breaking discoveries that offer insights into the biology of breast cancer have come as a result of the program, including revolutionary work that led to the development of the innovative drug Herceptin. From new methods of extracting breast cancer cells at their earliest stages, to unprecedented research into gene/environment interaction and quality of life issues, the DOD BCRP leads the way in generating new approaches to breast cancer prevention, treatment, and detection. The Institute of Medicine, in two analyses of the program, overwhelmingly supports continued investment in the DOD BCRP, stating "the program fills a unique niche among public and private funding sources for cancer research. It is not duplicative of other programs and is a promising vehicle for forging new ideas and scientific breakthroughs in the nation's fight against breast cancer."
- **It is innovative and unique:** The DOD BCRP has a unique grants structure that allows it to be more flexible and to fund innovative, high-risk, high-return research, enabling it to quickly respond to current scientific advances and to fill gaps by focusing on areas of research that are promising but otherwise underfunded.
- **It is efficient:** Approximately 90 percent of the appropriated funds go directly to competitive, peer-reviewed research grants awarded only on the basis of scientific merit.
- **It is transparent and accountable to the public:** This is evidenced by the inclusion of consumer advocates at both the peer and programmatic review levels. The consumer perspective helps the scientists understand how the research will affect the breast cancer community and allows for funding decisions based on the concerns and needs of patients

and the medical community. Each researcher who receives funds from the program must present their results to the American people online and at public meetings called “Era of Hope.” The transparency of the DOD BCRP allows scientists, consumers, and the American public to see the exceptional progress made in breast cancer research.

While the prevention and cure of breast cancer is not yet within our grasp, with the proper investments, we can win the fight against breast cancer. In 2020, it is estimated that 276,480 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed among U.S. women and approximately 2,620 new cases among U.S. men and more than 42,000 will die of the disease this year. In addition to invasive cancers, 62,930 new cases of in situ breast cancer will be diagnosed among women in the U.S. in 2018. Notably, research has also shown that breast cancer rates among female service members are significantly higher than in the general civilian population. Despite tremendous efforts to combat this terrible disease, we still have work to do to learn how to prevent, treat, and cure breast cancer. The DOD BCRP is a critical tool in this effort.

The Appropriations Committee has shown great determination and leadership in the search for answers in continuing to fund the DOD BCRP and by continuing to maintain the integrity of this model program of research. **We thank you for your longstanding leadership with respect to the DOD BCRP and ask that you provide funding of \$150 million for fiscal year (FY) 2021 for the DOD BCRP in the Department of Defense Appropriations bill.**

Sincerely,

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Martha McSally
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Mazie Hirono
United States Senator